

Minutes of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 17 January 2006.

Present:

Members of the Committee: Councillor Ken Browne (Chair)
“ George Atkinson
“ Richard Chattaway (Vice Chair)
“ Gordon Collett
“ Jose Compton
“ Eithne Goode
“ Katherine King
“ Frank McCarney
“ Phillip Morris-Jones
“ Ray Sweet

Other members in attendance: Councillor Martin Heatley (Cabinet portfolio holder for Environment)

Officers: Victoria Cook, Assistant to the Labour Group, Performance and Development Directorate
Graham Fitton, Head of Transport and Highways, Environment and Economy Directorate
Adrian Hart, Transport Planner, Environment and Economy Directorate.
Jean Hardwick, Principal Committee Administrator, Performance and Development Directorate.
Roger Newham, Head of Transport Planning Unit, Environment and Economy Directorate.
Ian Marriott, Principal Solicitor, Performance and Development Directorate
Ken Simons, County Forestry Officer
Gereint Stoneman, Corporate Review Officer, Performance and Development Directorate
Martin Stott, Head of Waste and Environment, Environment and Economy Directorate.

Also: Paul Quinn, Environment Agency
Paul Evans, Environment Agency
Rodney King, Member of the Public

1. General

(1) Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Nina Knapman and Joan Lea.

(2) Members Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

Members declared personal interests as members of district/borough councils as listed below:

Warwick District Council

Councillors Jose Compton and Eithne Goode.

Rugby Borough Council

Councillor Gordon Collett.

North Warwickshire Borough Council

Councillor Ray Sweet.

(3) (a) Minutes of the Meetings held on 21 November 6 and 19 December 2005.

The minutes of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings held on 21 November, 6 and 19 December 2006 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

(b) Matters Arising

In connection with the meeting held on 6 December 2005, minute 3, Climate Change Strategy for Warwickshire, Councillor Ethnie Goode expressed concern about the comments made by Members on this item, which she considered to be unfair and with which she did not want to be associated. She considered the report had been well written and commended the officers' knowledge on the subject.

2. Public Questions Time

None

3. Presentation by the Environment Agency - Creating a Better Midlands

Paul Quinn, Environment Manager, Lower Severn Area presented the Environment Agency's Corporate Strategy for 2006-2011 - Creating a Better Midlands. (A copy of the presentation material was circulated to Members).

In reply to questions Paul Quinn said that the Environment Agency –

- was working with Severn Trent Water on preparing drought plans and flood defences;
- was working with the District and Borough Councils on raising the profile and addressing the problem of fly-tipping;

The Chair thanked Paul Quinn for attending the meeting and for his presentation.

(The Chair left the room during discussion of the following item and for the exempt minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2005, minute 11 below)

(Vice Chair in the Chair)

4. Final report following the Single Issue Meeting held to scrutinise the Management of the Highways Maintenance Contract

The Vice Chair presented the report of the Strategic Director of Performance and Development, which outlined the recommendations made at the single-issue meeting of the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on 21st November 2005 to scrutinise the management of the Highways Maintenance Contract. He advised Members that one of the recommendations made at the meeting had not been included in the recommendations in the report and related to clarification of management responsibility of the contract. He had been advised, subsequent to the meeting, that management responsibilities for contracts were set out in Contract Standing Orders.

Resolved, unanimously, that the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee:

- (1) adopt the observations in Section 2 of this report;
- (2) request a report within six months on the contract assessing progress on the matters included in the report submitted to the Committee on 21 November 2005;
- (3) request that it be consulted on improvement priorities for 2006/07 before they are determined through the contract mechanisms.

(Councillor Ken Browne resumed as Chair)

5. Highway Trees in Warwickshire: Recording of Condition and Proposed Future Programme.

Ken Simons presented the report of the Strategic Director of Resources, which summarised progress to date on recording the condition of trees on the Council's land, and the proposed future programme.

During discussion Members commented on the need for:

- closer liaison with the National Farmers Union (NFU) and the Warwickshire Landowners Association to highlighted the problem of trees blowing over onto the highway (Fosse Way, in particular, being quoted);
- a further report outlining the contractual responsibility for maintaining highway trees;
- clarification about the budget available for replacement/planting of highway trees;

In reply to questions Ken Simons explained that current work had focussed on urban areas and there was still more to be done before inspecting the rural routes. In the rural areas he would be seeking to

identify and map trees on County Council's owned land including those trees at greatest risk.

Councillor Martin Heatley commended the work of the County Forestry Team in particular its valuable contribution to maintaining the rural and urban tree population.

Resolved that –

- (1) progress on recording the condition of trees for which the County Council has a responsibility be noted;
- (2) the issue of the maintenance of privately owned trees which have an impact on the highway be raised with the NFU and the Landowners Association;
- (3) the County Forestry Officer be asked to prepare a further report to a future meeting detailing the contract arrangements with the District/Borough Councils on maintenance of highway trees including information about the process for planting new trees on the highway.

6. Warwickshire Provisional Transport Plan 2005 Consultation

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Environment and Economy, which outlined the County Council's statutory responsibility to produce a Local Transport Plan (LTP). The LTP set out the County's Transport Strategy, and provided the framework for how transport and accessibility would be improved across Warwickshire over the next five years. A public consultation had been undertaken on the Provisional LTP, which was submitted to the Department for Transport in July 2005. Members were invited to comment on the consultation responses and the proposed response of the County Council to the concerns and issues raised by consultees.

Rodney King spoke in support of the provision of a cycle route on the A452 between Kenilworth and Leamington. He asked Members to support the inclusion of this route in the Transport Plan as a medium to long-term aim to enable access to external funding sources. He acknowledged the high cost of providing this route and suggested a medium term goal would be to improve the worst patches along the route and to look for external funding to support that view.

During discussion Members expressed support for Mr King's proposal but highlighted that this issue had been raised previously but had not been progressed because of cost. Additionally, this proposal had involved dualling the route of the A4452, which had not previously been supported by Leamington residents.

Adrian Hart referred Members to pages 12 and 13 of the Appendix to the report where the position was explained. He added that the LTP Cycling Strategy would be amended to include the Kenilworth and Leamington route as a named medium/long term proposed route in the Cycling Strategy

Action Plan and this would be progressed should external funding become available.

Resolved that the Committee endorse the results of the public consultation on the Warwickshire Provisional Local Transport 2005 and asked for more openness in relation to the consultation on the LTP Annual Progress Report.

7. Future Work Programme and Items Relevant to the Work of this Committee

(a) Provisional Items for Future Meetings

Members noted the table setting out provisional items for future meetings of the Committee.

(b) Forward Plan

Members noted Forward Plan items relevant to the work of this Committee -

Cabinet – 2 February 2006

Coleshill Parkway Transport Interchange – Approval to Enter Partnership

Cabinet – 9 March 2006

Provision of Pedestrian Crossing and Pedestrian Phases at Traffic Signals.
Revenue Estimates 2006/07 Department of Environment and Economy

Council – 21 February 2006

Delegation of Powers for Determining Objections to Traffic Orders with a purely local interest

8. Any Other Business

The Chair agreed to take the following item, which, was referred to the Committee from Cabinet on the 12 January 2006, as urgent business.

9. Leamington Spa Urban Mixed Priority Scheme (LUMP) with a bid for additional funding to complete the scheme in 2006/07

The Chair referred to the report of the Strategic Director of Environment and Economy outlining the Leamington Spa Urban Mixed Priority Scheme and the bid for additional funding, which was referred from Cabinet on 12 January 2006 for further consideration by this Committee.

The Chair said that funding to progress the scheme was not an issue for the Committee, and he had received assurances from all political parties,

Including the portfolio holder, that funding for Phase 2 would be favourable considered for inclusion in the capital programme in the February budget meeting of the County Council. However, there was concern about the costing process, the reason why the costs had increased dramatically, and whether, and what, measures had been taken to mitigate the escalating costs in Phase 1. He proposed that this item be deferred to a future meeting to enable a report to be provided giving an analysis of these issues.

Resolved that Cabinet be informed that discussion of this item by the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee has been deferred to a future meeting to enable a joint report to be prepared by the Strategic Directors of Environment and Economy and Resources detailing how the costs of the scheme had been estimated, why they had increased dramatically, and what measures had been taken to mitigate the escalating costs in Phase 1.

10. Reports Containing Confidential or Exempt Information

Resolved that members of the public be excluded from the meeting for the item mentioned below on the grounds that their presence would involve the disclosure of confidential or exempt information as defined in paragraph 7 of the Local Government Act 1972'.

11. Exempt Minutes of the meetings held on 21 November and 19 December 2005.

Resolved that the exempt minutes of the meetings held on 21 November and 19 December 2005 be agreed and signed as a correct record.

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Chair of Committee

The Committee rose at 4:00 p.m.